

CATCH MORE FISH WITH THIS SIMPLE FEEDER

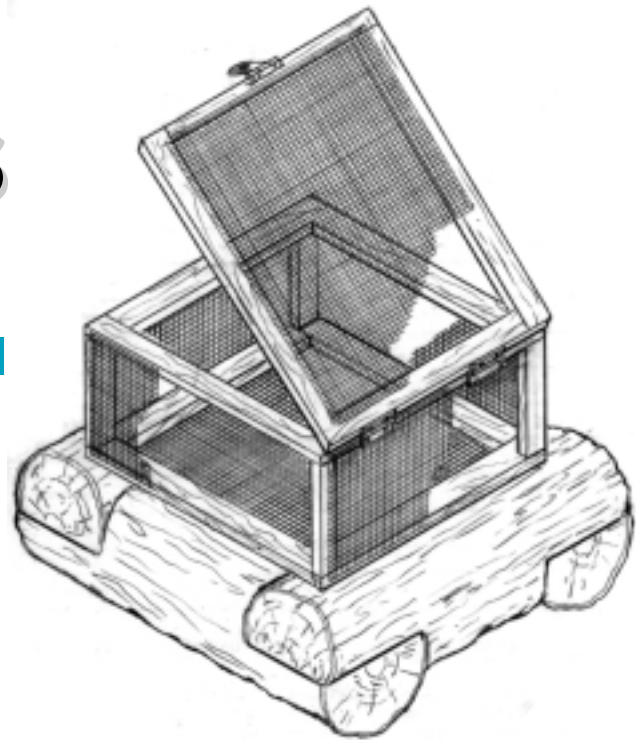
BY REV. J.D. HOOKER

Spring is almost here, and for many of us that means an incredible amount of work is waiting to be done. Garden beds have to be tilled and planted, fences mended, and everything that broke down during the winter needs to be fixed. Like most other country folk, during the spring season I get to feeling fortunate when I'm finally able to sneak in an hour or two to relax a little. In fact, no matter how busy I get, or how hard I wind up working, fishing seems to become the single uppermost thought on my mind. Any time I can manage to squeak in even a couple of "spare" hours, I'm out on the water. And my wife doesn't mind, either. Who do you think is usually fishing with me?

As difficult as sneaking in the odd hour or so for fishing, it really helps to have a place where you are guaranteed a good catch. Which is why, what my wife calls "Joe's Fishing Insurance Policy" seems to be such a great idea.

The principle behind this idea is simple. Have you ever noticed how panfish seem to congregate around the docks where folks clean their catches and toss the scraps back into the water? It's very much like the manner in which truckers pile into really good highway restaurants or politicians hover around money. As long as there's some sort of cover (weed beds, drop-offs, piers, and the like) where fish can hide and find any sort of steady, easily obtained food supply, they're going to congregate.

As simple as this idea sounds, I've found that the concept seems pretty revolutionary to many people. But, from only a few short pieces of logs, a few lumber scraps, some hardware cloth, a piece of rope, and a large rock you can quickly assemble a feeder which will practically guarantee you'll always bring home nice catches. I've got two or three such fish feeders set out in fairly secluded locations on every lake and pond we fish regularly, and I long ago learned that

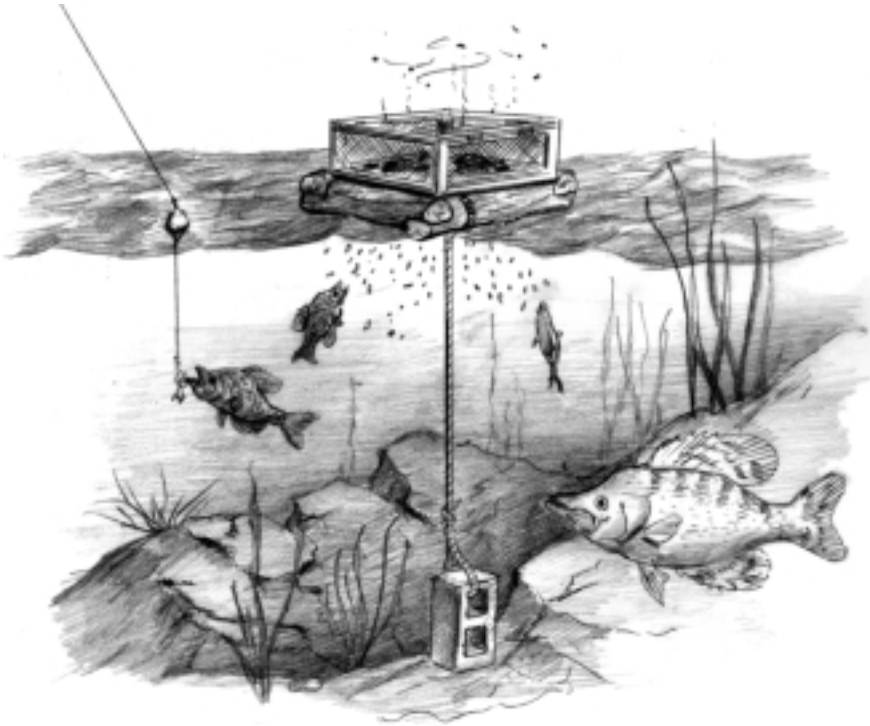


they really pay off.

To fashion one of these super-efficient fish attracters for yourself, assemble the simple box-like wooden framework illustrated above. Use whatever lumber you have handy and build this project to whatever size would seem appropriate for your own use. (The guide I learned about this from liked a 3'x4'x18" box). Next, you'll need to cover this framework with ½-inch mesh galvanized hardware cloth. You'll need to put together a mesh-covered lid like the one shown, as well, or you'll wind up feeding birds rather than the fish.

Normally I'll use roughly 8-inch diameter sections of logs, notched and nailed together as shown, to shape the raft upon which this cage-looking feeder floats. Then galvanized nails are used to affix the feeder atop the raft. A length of poly or nylon rope, long enough to reach from the lake bottom to the high water level (I'll always add a few extra feet just in case), is also needed. After attaching an old cinder-block, a few bricks, or some other anchor to one end of the rope and the feeder to the other, it is set out in a likely fishing spot and just left there.

Now, you'll need to place something which will readily attract flies inside of your fish feeder. For our first trip out each spring, I like to use any sort of meat scraps, but spoilt fruit or vegetables work well enough if such scraps aren't available. After that first



trip, fish heads and other refuse from our catches go inside the feeders.

This sort of bait doesn't actually feed, or even attract any fish. What it does do is draw flies by the thousands. While feeding on the refuse, the flies also lay their eggs. Then, quicker than seems possible, the eggs hatch into masses of crawling maggots. While as the feeder bobs around on the surface of the water, the maggots just naturally keep falling through the mesh floor and sink into the water, drawing a pretty large number of fish to feed. This means that worms and most other baits let down on a hook near this feeding station will usually produce near instant strikes.

After using fish feeders of this type for several years, we've found that generally the larger panfish will hold a little deeper than the smaller ones in the vicinity, while the bass and other larger fish striving to prey on the panfish are usually out in the peripheral areas. At times, we've also taken some pretty nice cats right off the bottom near such feeders.

With the ever present flies and other insects constantly buzzing around these feeders, hand-tied flies and other small surface-riding artificials, are normally very productive as well. Of course, you'll also find there will always be a few well-fed fish hanging around your feeders that are just a little too wily to hook. This is actually a good thing as it ensures that you're leaving plenty of nice fish to breed for fishing

trips in future years. In fact, I've found that after using such feeding stations for about four or five years, the sizes of the individual fishes in each location have increased considerably.

Whether your own fishing is done on a lake, river, pond, or wherever, I know you'll be pleased with the results should you decide on using a similar feeding station to ensure your own catches. One thing I hope you'll remember, though: since this sort of feeder all but guarantees quick and relatively easy catches, fishing near one is a really terrific way to introduce youngsters new to this sport, to the laid-back pleasures of fishing.

Now that I've finished typing this up, I think I'll go fishing.Δ

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